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ABSTRACT

The status of foreign language instruction is reviewed and guidelines are offered for taking action at all educational levels to improve foreign language instruction nationwide. Foreign language instruction has declined since the 1950's when the federal government first committed funds to improve programs and train teachers. National needs, proposed legislation, and the role of foreign languages in universities, high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools are summarized. It is recommended that: (1) funds be committed at the federal level, (2) high school and college accreditation standards require the inclusion of foreign language instruction, (3) teacher certification requirements include foreign language proficiency, (4) college entry and graduation requirements include foreign language proficiency, (5) public schools provide foreign language instruction from middle school through high school, (6) language curricula include cultural knowledge and skills, (7) high schools provide instruction in less commonly taught languages such as Japanese and Russian, and (8) programs be designed to introduce elementary school children to foreign languages. (RW)

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MEETING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CRISIS IN THE U.S.: GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

Lester W. McKim

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lester W. McKim is a foreign language educator with extensive teaching experience at the junior high school, high school, and college levels. He has been very active in regional and national foreign language organizations and has served as a consultant on foreign language issues to the National Endowment for the Humanities and to the U.S. Office of Education. He has received several awards and grants for his contributions to foreign language education.

Dr. McKim has published widely in professional journals and is the author of several books on foreign language education, including *Individualizing the Foreign Language Classroom: Perspectives for Teachers* and *Effective Foreign Language Teaching in the Secondary Schools.* Dr. McKim, who holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Washington, is currently teaching French at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

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PREFACE

Meeting the foreign language crisis in the U.S.: Guidelines for action is intended to assist educators, policy makers, and concerned community members in implementing foreign language programs that can strengthen our nation's foreign language resources. Its point of departure is the report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies and other publications which document a serious decline in foreign language education in the U.S. Paralleling this decline has been the increasing need for American professionals with sufficient fluency in a foreign language to communicate with their counterparts in other countries.

The publication was commissioned by the National Center for Bilingual Research, which was created by the National Institute of Education to conduct research and disseminate information on language learning and language use in the United States. The author, Dr. Lester McKim, an eminent foreign language educator who has served on several national panels addressing foreign language issues, is uniquely qualified for the task of providing guidelines for meeting the nation's foreign language crisis.

We are confident that *Meeting the foreign language crisis in the U.S.: Guidelines for action* provides many useful recommendations; we hope that some of these will be acted upon and help contribute to the development of an adequate pool of professionals who can communicate effectively in languages other than English.

National Center for Bilingual Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1958 the Federal Government responded to growing evidence of inadequate foreign language instruction in the nation's schools by passing the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) with a commitment of funds for improving that instruction. Thousands of foreign language teachers, interested in becoming stronger teachers, attended NDEA institutes conducted in the United States and abroad. In addition, the NDEA provided funds that could be used by (1) schools to modernize their foreign language programs; (2) states to provide foreign language instructional leadership at the state level; and (3) universities to strengthen their language research, area studies, and teacher training programs.

By the beginning of the 1970s, the government had eliminated most of the NDEA funds. By 1978 it was clear that foreign language education was returning to the level of the 1950s. President Carter named the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies to assess national needs and to recommend government action designed to correct weaknesses they found.

This document reflects the report of the President's Commission and other publications; its premise is that (1) the United States needs to improve its abilities to communicate with people from other countries, languages, and cultures; (2) improved communication can enhance the chances for world peace; and (3) our economy, because it is dependent on our successful interaction with other countries, can thrive only if we move toward becoming more of a multi-lingual society.

Universities and schools do not have the resources required to develop foreign language programs that will meet the needs of our society as we move toward the twenty-first century. Representatives Paul Simon (Illinois) and Leon Panetta (California) have proposed legislation that could help move the United States toward adequate foreign language

resources. The President's Commission proposed more extensive legislation. In spite of discouraging economic conditions in 1983 (indeed because of our highly unfavorable balance of trade), Americans should encourage national legislators to expedite provisions for government support of improved language programs at all educational levels.

State departments of education can assume a leadership role by working for policy legislation at the state and regional levels, such as relating secondary school and college or university accreditation to foreign language offerings and teacher certification to language proficiency. They can also encourage colleges and universities to require proficiency in a foreign language for entry into or graduation from the institution, and they can encourage public schools to develop long-sequence foreign language programs.

Public school educators should use the growing trend of public support for foreign language instruction to press for needed improvements, not only in languages currently taught in our schools (mostly French, German, and Spanish) but in languages rarely taught but of vital importance to the United States, for example Chinese, Japanese, and Russian.

INTRODUCTION

At no time since the late 1950s has there been a greater need for a clear set of guidelines for people who make decisions that affect foreign language learning in the United States. During the 1950s, after Russia launched Sputnik, the U.S. Congress took action on America's inadequate foreign language education by passing the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which contained several support provisions for improved foreign language instruction. Language courses flourished for a few years at all levels, elementary school through university. Universities developed foreign language teacher training seminars, institutes, and graduate programs, as well as language and area centers.

By the late 1970s, however, the United States had slipped back into many of the same patterns that had alarmed national leaders 20 years earlier: Fewer than one percent of our nation's elementary school students studied a foreign language; only about four percent of our nation's graduating high school students studied more than two years of a foreign language; about one-fifth of our two-year colleges offered no foreign language instruction. The end result was that from 1963 to 1974 there was a 44 percent drop in the number of college students enrolled in foreign language classes.

This paper reviews the foreign language instructional scene at all academic levels in the context of the international role the United States plays. It refers to publications that can provide more detailed information, and it recommends actions that can correct some of the inadequacies of foreign instructional programs as they are being conducted in the 1980s.

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CRISIS IN THE U.S.

Illinois Congressman Paul Simon (1980) calls the current situation in the United States a "Foreign Language Crisis." Many educators and legislators agree. In 1983, as in the 1950s when Congress passed the NDEA, the nation must again respond by giving special priority to math, science, and foreign language education.

The NDEA response to evidence that the United States was falling seriously behind Russia in the technical and scientific fields was due, in part, to the fact that few American scientists and technicians were able to either communicate with their counterparts in Russia or to read the reports of important research in languages other than English. The NDEA provided funds to improve foreign language instruction, to train foreign language teacher trainers and other foreign language leaders, and to encourage area studies. Some 50,000 foreign language teachers, including most current foreign language educational leaders, participated in NDEA-funded programs.

But NDEA provisions for foreign language support disappeared during the 1970s. The immediate effect was that most state departments of education eliminated the position of foreign language supervisor, and universities dropped their foreign language teacher training programs. Those actions, along with the generally unfavorable financial climate for education in the United States, eliminated or severly limited state and federal support systems for foreign language education, returning the nation to its current "foreign language crisis."

Congressman Simon's study of the situation led him to introduce H.R. 3231, the National Security and Economic Growth Through Foreign Language Improvement Act, which would provide $87 million in grants to educational institutions to (1) fund model programs in elementary and secon-

dary schools, (2) fund model programs in community colleges, (3) subsidize study of less commonly taught languages or of languages beyond the second year in post-secondary schools, and (4) provide support for post-secondary institutions that require foreign language study for graduation.

Simon subsequently joined Representative Leon Panetta of California in sponsoring H.R. 5738, designed to improve translation and interpretation services available to the U.S. Government by providing for the establishment of a Bureau of Language Services within the Department of State to be headed by an Assistant Secretary.

Simon, Panetta, and other legislators who support these acts argue that the United States is no longer THE superpower of the world; rather, it is but one of several power blocks. One effect of this change of status is that Americans can no longer limit their communication to English as they negotiate important political, economic, or cultural affairs. As a Japanese businessman told Simon, "The most important language to know is the language of the client." American political, economic, and cultural negotiators are handicapped when they can speak only English.

To overcome that handicap, the United States needs to develop pools of people in all professions who can communicate with their counterparts in other nations. These resources already exist in other nations because virtually all students are required to learn one or more foreign languages. Compared with students in many other parts of the world, graduates of U.S. high schools and colleges are found to be weak in their knowledge not only of foreign languages, but of geography, history, and the current events of other nations as well.

Life in the 1980s is more complicated than it was during the 1950s, and it will be even more complicated in another 20 years. Our current elementary and secondary students will be the nation's leaders as we move into the twenty-first century. If these students are to be equipped for their roles, everyone

with responsibilities for making decisions that affect foreign language instruction must prioritize their resources to support and improve programs. At the same time, state and national legislators must recognize the need for change and create legislation that will encourage and support those educators as they strive to improve our nation's current situation.

NATIONAL NEEDS/ PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The responsibility for correcting deficiencies in American education lies ultimately with American educators. Those educators, however, are more likely to take action if they are encouraged by state and/or federal legislation backed by financial support. Vocational education and education for the handicapped are two examples of programs not given adequate attention until they became national priorities with designated policies and funds to encourage and support action by local educators. The NDEA was the largest program the nation had mounted for the purpose of assisting specified academic areas, including foreign language instruction. In 1958, the U.S. House of Representatives received the following message from its Education and Labor Committee: "As a nation we are not prepared *linguistically* to exercise the full force of our leadership in the building of a peaceful world... America can ill afford to let this situation continue" (emphasis added).

But the situation has continued. In his book, Simon documents the nation's needs and suggests legislation. House Resolutions 3231 and 5738 are attempts to enact needed legislation. Simon's findings are similar to those of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (1979), which recommended government support for a wide variety of activities beyond formal education and international exchange programs. The following is a summary of the Commission's recommendations:

1. **$67 million**, new money, for regional foreign language centers, summer institutes abroad, incentive funding to encourage foreign language instruction at all levels of education, establishment of international high schools, and a national assessment program.
2. **$21 million** (up from $3.5 million) for model state programs, assistance in employing state specialists,

teacher development programs, and international school exchanges—all of these with a focus on elementary and secondary education.

3. **$97 million** (up from $22 million) for higher education to establish new NDEA Title VI foreign language centers, to offer a variety of graduate and faculty post-doctoral fellowships, to subsidize needed research and to improve center libraries and facilities.
4. **$60 million** (up from $42 million) to support international educational exchanges.

The Commission further recommended that (1) with assistance from the federal government, each state name a foreign language and an international studies specialist, (2) that each state establish a state advisory committee for foreign language and international studies, (3) that state and regional commissions responsible for the accreditation of institutions of higher education and the certification of teachers make international education a major concern of all teacher training programs, and (4) that state governments encourage foreign student enrollments in U.S. institutions of higher education by holding tuition for foreign students at the same level as it is for students from the state.

The Commission also called on private foundations to enlarge their commitment and leadership in international educational exchanges and to fund non-governmental clearinghouses to encourage community world affairs organizations and programs. In turn, American business and labor were asked to respond by giving more priority to foreign language and international studies training in their staff recruitment.

The dollar amounts related to the recommendations of the Commission seem exorbitant in the light of current debates on federal funds for education. Those amounts, however, should be considered in the context of diminishing support for foreign language and international studies from all sectors, private as well as public. The Commission found that:

> The Ford Foundation... which provided about $27 million annually between 1960 and 1976 for advanced training and research in international affairs and foreign areas now contributes only $3-4 million a year for similar purposes. At the same time, federal support for area centers and the Fulbright exchange program has been cut in half by a decade of inflation, and federally financed foreign language and area fellowships declined from a peak of 2557 in 1969 to 828 in 1978. Federal expenditures for university-based foreign affairs research declined from $20.3 million to $8.5 million, or 58 percent in constant dollars. (p. 9)

Congressman Simon's concern is prompted by the U.S. trade deficit. At the end of World War II, he states, the United States was the world's economic superpower in terms of technical know-how and productive and transporting capacities. As other nations have recovered from World War II and have become involved in world trade, competition has stiffened:

> ... in every year from 1954 to 1971, the United States exported more than it imported. In 1971, however, we had a trade deficit of $2.7 billion. Since that time, we have had only two years with trade surpluses.... The 1978 trade deficit was a tenfold increase over 1971, up to $28.5 billion (p. 21)

And, Simon reports, the American economy is dependent on world trade:

> One of every eight American manufacturing jobs is dependent on exports, and one of every three American agricultural acres is used to grow produce for export. Future policies must strengthen, not jeopardize, this important segment of our economy. (p. 23)

However, our industrial leaders lack training to compete successfully on the international scene. The American Council of Education (President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1979) reported in 1977 that surveys it had conducted indicated some major problems:

> ... (a) very high percentage of individuals are still becoming presidents of multinational corporations without ever having had any international work experience and that many managers with international responsibilities had no international studies while at the university... that more than 75 percent of individuals receiving doctorates in Business Administration had not taken a single international business course during their graduate studies. (p. 127)

Simon is also concerned about the impressions that Americans make on people in other countries through travel. The unfortunate distinction of American travelers is that few have a working knowledge of any foreign language or an understanding of the differences in ways of thinking and acting that result from speaking another language:

> We are a nation of travelers. One-tenth of our nation goes abroad each year. What a plus it would be for the United States if only one-half or one-quarter of the tourists and students and armed service personnel visiting abroad could speak another language with minimal fluency. Instead of offending people, we would learn from them.... We send approximately 456,000 troops overseas, well equipped to use certain weapons. The chance that they will be called upon to use those weapons—happily—is small. However, the chance that they will have a chance to use German, Korean, or another language spoken where they will be stationed, is almost 100 percent. (p. 58)

Simon calls for attention to the nation's need for improved foreign language instruction:

> ... there are some essential long-range answers... 5. A quantum leap in the study of foreign languages, and with it, a sensitivity to other cultures... the Task Force on Inflation of the House Budget Committee, in 1979, recommended expansion of exports and stimulation of language study: 'We are not adequately studying languages and cultures of other countries... and as a result we are not getting to know our customers. Not surprisingly, we do not sell as well as we should.' (p. 26)

There is evidence that Americans are gaining some consciousness of the seriousness of the situation. John R. Hubbard and Robert A. Ristau of Eastern Michigan University report (*Foreign Language Annals,* April 1982) that most businesses responding to their survey indicate an increased need for employees with bilingual skills and that employers think highly of both the Bachelor of Business Administration degree combined with a foreign language minor and the Language and International Trade program as ways of preparing individuals for bilingual careers.

UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CRISIS

The American college and university systems have traditionally set the intellectual tone for the nation. The American university system has largely met its challenge in terms of research on foreign languages, but it has fallen seriously short in its attention to foreign language instruction. Relatively few colleges and universities require foreign language competence for either entry or graduation. Many doctoral programs have no foreign language competency requirement, and, not surprisingly, enrollments in foreign language classes are declining.

The following scenario is typical of the situation of foreign language instruction in liberal arts colleges: Foreign language professors are preoccupied with literature and research, an inclination reinforced by tenure and promotion criteria. Graduate students and non-tenured professors frequently teach the language courses, leaving tenured professors free to teach literature. Consequently, tenured professors lose contact with and concern for the language courses, and teaching "language" loses status. And, there is no tradition for college professors to work with their high school colleagues. Those who do may jeopardize their tenure and/or promotion by using their time for such work rather than for research and publications.

It is significant that two of the national leaders in the attempts to improve foreign language instruction through support from the NDEA from 1958 to 1968, Kenneth Milderberger and William Riley Parker, were scholars of English literature rather than scholars of similar status from fields of foreign language literature.

The NDEA did make a difference at the university and college level, for example:

- Some universities developed graduate programs of foreign language education, some of which still exist.

Research in language learning gained status.

- American college overseas programs increased and have continued.
- Foreign language educators, most of whom participated in one or more of the NDEA-funded programs, founded the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in 1967. ACTFL serves as a national advocate for foreign language instruction and as an outlet for language-related research.
- Government support led to an increase in the number of language and area centers on university campuses and in the number of languages taught.

Despite progress made during the last two decades, universities and colleges have helped create the national foreign language crisis. Now they can assume a leadership role to help solve those problems. Many improvements can be made without inordinate expenditures, such as:

1. **Include competency in a foreign language as a requirement for graduation.** The United States is the only major country in the world that graduates college students without competency in a foreign language. Without graduation requirements, college enrollments remain low; without entry requirements, high school students are less inclined to elect foreign language study. There appears to be a trend toward reinstatement of foreign language competency requirements for entry into or graduation from college. If that trend continues, enrollments will increase and the national crisis will be eased.
2. **Continue and extend the policy of offering advanced placement to students whose competence in a foreign language makes it possible for them to perform successfully in second-year college classes or beyond.** Such placement encourages high school students to continue their study of a foreign language for more than two or three years; by beginning their college study in intermediate language classes, students find

it easier to complete language majors or strong minors, often as a support for such majors as business or international studies.

3. **Develop language programs on foreign campuses.** Colleges too small to develop their own programs should join a consortium of colleges. Many such consortia of colleges have been developed and help to assure quality instruction. Colleges can strengthen their overseas programs by:
   - —requiring participating students to demonstrate adequate language proficiency to perform successfully in courses conducted in the target language.
   - —including instruction and experiences that will increase students' knowledge of the target culture in specified ways.
   - —focusing student attention on current events and international affairs as reported in the media of the host country.
   - —planning special programs for elementary and secondary school foreign language teachers.
4. **Review tenure and promotion criteria.** Colleges should assure that adequate credit is given professors for language teaching and for their efforts to improve foreign language instruction in general through work with their high school colleagues.
5. **Review class assignments of tenured professors.** Tenured professors should be required to teach lower-division language courses in addition to literature classes.

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Americans traditionally expect high schools to include foreign language instruction in their curricula. Colleges prepare foreign language teachers for instruction in high school rather than in middle or elementary schools. Publishers prepare texts and related materials for use at the high school level, though they may adapt them for middle school use. Many state and regional accreditation agencies require that high schools include foreign language instruction as a criterion for full accreditation.

Despite the seemingly favorable conditions, as compared with middle or elementary schools, Congressman Simon, the President's Commission of Foreign Language and International Studies, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, and foreign language educators in general consider the condition of high school foreign language teaching to be disgracefully poor. On the basis of earlier studies of high school enrollment, foreign language educators estimate that during any one year, only 18 percent of the nation's high school students are studying a foreign language. In addition to low enrollments, other conditions led Simon to include high school foreign language instruction as part of the foreign language crisis:

- Too few high school students continue the study of a foreign language long enough to become proficient. Only four percent of the nation's high school graduates complete more than two high school years.
- Many high schools have declining enrollments. With fewer students in the school, it becomes more expensive to offer advanced levels of foreign language instruction, and those classes often disappear.
- In many districts where middle schools offer foreign language instruction, such instruction is not coordinated with high school instruction. The lack of

coordination discourages students from continuing to more advanced levels.

- The high school foreign language curriculum does not adequately reflect student needs in terms of gaining an understanding of culture and international relations. Since college teacher preparation programs have this same weakness, and since publishers produce materials without adequate attention to culture and international relations, the problem has not been solved by new teachers and materials.

The current shortage of funds for education limits the actions that educators can take to improve the foreign language crisis in high schools. As with colleges, the high schools must apply solutions that will not be inordinately expensive, and legislators must recognize their responsibility to support secondary education in general, and foreign language instruction in particular. Actions that can relieve the foreign language crisis at the high school level and prepare students for their lives in the twenty-first century include:

1. **Increase enrollments in foreign language courses.** High school administrators, counselors, and foreign language teachers should work cooperatively to increase enrollments. They should have detailed knowledge of college entry and graduation requirements or plans to impose such requirements in the near future. They should select teaching materials and use teaching strategies that will result in competency in the various language skills and knowledge of the culture and international relations of the countries whose languages are taught.
2. **Inform the public in general, and parents in particular, of the importance of foreign language study.** Each year during the National Foreign Language Week, many foreign language teachers and other interested high school educators participate in activities designed to bring important information to the attention of the public. ACTFL and many state foreign

language associations have developed guidelines for successful information campaigns. For example, the Washington Association of Foreign Language Teachers published *The Foreign Language Week Kit* that has been widely used in that state.

3. **Support state legislation requiring that every high school include foreign language instruction in its curriculum.** Today, far too many small high schools offer no foreign language instruction at all.
4. **Support district graduation requirements that include some competence in a foreign language.**
5. **Modify the foreign language curriculum to increase the number of course offerings.** High school educators should develop foreign language programs that will provide:
   - at least one year of instruction from which all students can benefit;
   - a three-year sequence for all college-bound students or students who have special interests in foreign language study;
   - a four- or five-year sequence for students who have special interests and abilities and who may wish to specialize in foreign language study.

Such sequences have been developed in some districts and can be replicated without inordinate costs. The Bellevue, Washington, Public Schools developed a six-year sequence in French, German, and Spanish that has continued for thirteen years. The success of that program has rested on the following characteristics:

1. The students may begin their foreign language instruction in Grades 7, 9, or during any high school year.
2. The three-year junior high program in French, German, and Spanish is considered the equivalent of two levels, or two high school years. Students move from the three-year program into Level Three or from Grade 9 into Level Two.

3. All teachers in each language group use the same series of teaching materials, though the junior high materials are adapted for the younger students.
4. Especially during the early years of the program, teachers met frequently to share ideas for improving their instruction. They developed supplementary materials designed especially for students in each junior high year and for Level Three in high school, including materials that focused on the target cultures.
5. Junior and high school foreign language teachers developed an evaluation system that provided for monitoring of the program, assuring district and building decision makers that program and instructional goals were being met; that enrollments were continuing at a desirable level; and that students mastered the stated instructional objectives.
6. Teachers publicized their program, ensuring the continuing support of other educators and of parents in the district and encouraging the enrollment of students in beginning or continuing classes.

In addition to the above recommendations, high school educators need to develop instructional programs in languages that are rarely taught in our schools today but will be of vital importance to any country involved in international affairs as we move into the next century. Many schools offered Russian after Sputnik brought Russia to the consciousness of Americans, but most schools have now dropped that language from their curricula. Some schools have offered instruction in Asian languages, usually Japanese or Chinese, but with similar results. Nonetheless, districts such as Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, continue their efforts to teach Asian languages, recognizing the importance of Pacific Rim countries in terms of our West Coast economy and of our national security. Such districts need and deserve assistance from state and federal funds or from foundations. With such assistance, promising pilot programs can be developed. These programs can provide guidelines to help

other districts that wish to offer instruction in Asian languages, in Russian, or in other important languages not now taught in our high schools.

It may well be that the five most important languages in the world as we enter the next century will be Chinese, English, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Citizens of the United States will need a familiarity with all those languages that can only be gained if they are taught in our high schools. If Chinese, Japanese, and Russian are to gain the status of Spanish, high school educators will have to achieve a near miracle. Still, the need is there, and an increased effort is required. Program development will have to go through the procedures outlined above in the description of the six-year program in Bellevue. It will be far more costly than instruction in French and German, but the importance of those languages is so great that government and foundation funds must be provided.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

For generations, American students went to elementary schools for eight years, then to a four-year high school. By 1960, most districts had changed to a 6-3-3 plan, with students moving from elementary school to junior high school, which encompassed Grades 7, 8, and 9. Recently, many districts have joined a popular move to establish "middle schools," usually including Grades 6, 7, and 8. The fate of foreign language instruction programs has been influenced by these changes. Foreign language instruction is a traditional elective offering in high school. That tradition tended to filter down to Grade 9 in the junior high schools, and foreign language instruction frequently was introduced in Grade 9.

On the other hand, foreign language instruction has never gained the status of tradition in our elementary schools, and that lack of tradition has extended, in general, to Grades 7 and 8 in the junior high schools. Educators have tended to be highly prescriptive as they deal with Grades 7 and 8, specifying a heavy load of requirements, much as they do in elementary schools. Thus, when funds are low, teachers are difficult to find, students are restless, or the public calls for more "basic" instruction for Grades 7 and 8, foreign language programs are often dropped.

With Grade 9 in the junior high schools, foreign language instruction was usually present as an elective, and there was often a call for extending instruction to Grade 7 or 8. As middle schools have developed, however, they have frequently become even more prescriptive than the junior high schools, leaving little or no time for foreign language instruction. This trend poses a serious threat to adequate foreign language instruction in the United States. European educators take it for granted that children will begin studying a foreign language by not later than Grade 6. Instruction at that age assures a long sequence of instruction in one language and makes it

possible for interested students to complete several years of instruction in more than one foreign language.

Foreign language instruction clearly belongs in the middle schools, and it can be offered without inordinate costs if middle school educators are willing to adopt a more flexible philosophy concerning requirements for middle-school students and are willing to recognize the importance of foreign language competency.* Middle school educators planning foreign language instructional programs should:

1. Allow more than one year for students to achieve one "level" of foreign language work, a level being defined as the equivalent of one year of high school work. Middle schools with daily 40-minute periods should be able to complete two levels in three years.
2. Either require foreign language instruction for all students or develop an overall schedule that allows all students the option of foreign language instruction without forcing a choice between instruction in a foreign language and another elective that attracts many students, frequently music.
3. Allow as much time for foreign language instruction as is allocated to other academic subjects: frequently 40 minutes a day, five days a week.
4. Adopt teaching materials that are a middle-school portion of the series used in the high schools to which the students will go, but which are adapted, or can readily be adapted, for appropriate use with the younger students.
5. Work with high school foreign language teachers to assure a smooth transition for students as they move from middle school to high school instruction.
6. Design a system of evaluation that will provide data useful for monitoring and adjusting the program. For

*Readers are referred to the description above of the Bellevue Public School's six-year program, beginning in Grade 7.

example, it will be useful to have an annual record of student performance on a district test, of student enrollment in foreign language classes, of student retention in the program from one level to the next, and indications of public support. It is also useful to administer an objective measure of student attitudes from time to time, perhaps once every four or five years.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

During the 1950s, teaching foreign languages in the elementary schools (FLES) was considered and often tried in districts across the country. For many reasons, most FLES programs died during the late 1960s. Once again, however, parents are calling for foreign language instruction for their children. The recently published report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) also calls for foreign language instruction in the elementary grades:

> Achieving proficiency in a *foreign language* ordinarily requires from four to six years of study and should, therefore, be started in the elementary grades. We believe it is desirable that students achieve such proficiency because study of a foreign language introduces students to non-English-speaking cultures, heightens awareness and comprehension of one's native tongue, and serves the nation's needs in commerce, diplomacy, defense, and education. (p. 26)

Elementary educators who are considering implementation of a FLES program should consider the history of FLES programs of the 1950s and work to guard against conditions that caused those programs to fail. At the same time, they should benefit from the experiences of that time to help assure quality foreign language instruction.

In spite of the best of intentions, the FLES programs of the 1960s died for a number of reasons, including:

1. **Unreasonable expectations.** Enthusiastic proponents developed expectations on the part of parents, children, and educators that they were not able to meet. People who had observed the ease and naturalness with which small children learn other languages when they live in foreign countries claimed that similar results could be achieved in the classroom with a minimum of instruction. Since elementary school children tend to accept cultural differences quite easily, FLES leaders reasoned that children in their programs would become literally bicultural after a long sequence of instruction.

2. **Lack of program coordination.** The instructional program did not often become a part of a long sequence. After elementary instruction, lasting for varying amounts of time, students moved on to junior high schools where there was either no language offered in Grade 7, so the students were not able to continue, or there was a program that had not been articulated with the FLES program, and FLES students started over again.
3. **Shortage of instructional resources.** There was generally a lack of qualified teachers and appropriate teaching materials. The greatest progress in terms of proficiency, students' attitudes, and cultural insights appeared to be in classes where the regular teacher was qualified to teach the language and was able to relate the FLES instruction to teaching in other subject areas. Since such teachers were (and are) rare, districts hired FLES specialists to conduct instruction in the regular classrooms for a few minutes a day, often less than five times a week; or teachers watched television instructional programs with their children and tried to handle the follow-up instruction suggested by the television teacher.

As the novelty of FLES programs wore off, many districts discovered that they were investing a considerable amount of money for instruction that did not seem to be working. Inevitably, as resources became more scarce, those districts soon dropped their FLES programs.

There were so many different kinds of FLES programs during the 1960s that it is difficult to generalize about instruction at that level. The FLES program in Bellevue, Washington, was different from most other FLES programs in the Northwest, but its history and characteristics were similar to those in some other parts of the United States. A brief look at the history of that program will be instructive.

The program started in isolated classrooms during the 1950s. It was formalized in the early 1960s when a locally-

produced television program became available; the district employed specialists to visit classrooms and reinforce the instruction from the television program. Later, the television program was dropped and a staff of about fifteen specialists visited all Grade 5 and 6 classrooms for 30 minutes, three times a week. Meanwhile, the district was having serious problems with foreign language instruction at the junior high level, so most FLES graduates were unable to continue in Grade 7; those who could almost always started over as though no instruction had ever taken place.

After a careful assessment of the elementary and junior high programs and consideration of the cost of the FLES program, Bellevue decided to use the resources being spent for FLES to develop a strong junior high program that would lead smoothly into high school, making six years of instruction available in three languages. The FLES program was dropped.

Now, during the 1982-1983 school year, enthusiastic parents are paying specialists to offer instruction to elementary children before or after school in at least six of Bellevue's elementary schools. Naturally, the parents, specialists, and children in those schools hope the program will continue on a permanent basis with district support.

The recent surge of interest in Bellevue reflects similar attitudes in many parts of the nation. Near Bellevue, the Mercer Island Public Schools have for several years cooperated with parents interested in sponsoring a before- or after-school FLES program. Portions of that program have now moved into the regular school day. City systems, such as Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., report efforts to establish FLES programs. At least two language camps for elementary-age children were held during the summer, 1983, in Tacoma, Washington—one sponsored by the Pacific Lutheran University, and the other by the Annie Wright School. The Language School in Seattle, Washington, has been unable to meet demands for afternoon and Saturday schools for children.

As public demands for a renewal of FLES programs mount, elementary educators should:

1. **Plan programs whose stated goals can be met within limits imposed by time, personnel, resources, and other teaching conditions.** Since there are no "standard" FLES programs, educators have some flexibility in terms of goals, instructional objectives and parental expectations. For example:

   The Portland, Oregon, Public Schools are considering FLEX, a program that would introduce students to *languages*, (rather than a single language) and involve students in a variety of language/cultural experiences. The major goal for such programs is usually to increase student awareness of and interest in other languages and cultures.

   Summer camp programs are usually "immersion" in nature. Students live the target language and culture for a few hours a day, or day and night for a few weeks. Students in immersion programs may develop a feeling for the target language and culture that will lead them to further study in middle or high school, but such programs are usually separate from any public schools and cannot be expected to articulate with them.

   A few public schools in the United States have attempted to replicate the French/English bilingual education program developed in Montreal, Canada. Teachers fluent in both languages teach language skills in both and conduct their instructional programs for other subjects in both, teaching during the morning in one language and during the afternoon in the other.

2. **Develop proficiency-related programs with the same kinds of careful planning required for other sequential programs.** Curriculum planners should commit time from the regular school day for the instruction, thereby demonstrating their commitment to the program and making it available to students who may be

unable to attend before or after school.

They should take the same care in employing qualified teachers that they would in other specialized areas, such as art or music.

They should provide careful inservice for classroom teachers, if those teachers are expected to do any follow-up teaching. Regardless of the classroom teachers' responsibility for actual language instruction, it is vitally important that they understand the purpose of the program.

They should involve foreign language teachers from the middle and high schools which their students will feed into in order to get the support of those teachers and to assure that the instruction following the FLES experience will build on the proficiency of the students.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This review has provided some data that document the need for improved foreign language instruction in the United States and has referred to publications with further documentation. This section summarizes recommendations detailed in the document and constitutes a guideline for action by decision makers, concerned educators, and other community members.

1. Promote national legislation, such as H.R. 3231 sponsored by Congressman Paul Simon, and H.R. 5738 sponsored by Congressman Leon Panetta. Without the commitment of funds at the national level, there is little hope that the foreign language crisis can be remedied, especially in relation to teaching long sequence in public schools similar to those regularly taught in European schools, to teaching languages rarely found in secondary schools today, to encouraging universities to strengthen their instructional programs and requirements.
2. Promote state and regional accreditation standards for high schools and colleges that require the inclusion of foreign language instruction.
3. Promote state teacher certification requirements that include some proficiency in at least one foreign language.
4. Promote entry and graduation requirements for colleges that include some proficiency in at least one foreign language.
5. Encourage universities to recognize language teaching and participation by language professors in language-related research and program development as important criteria for tenure and promotion.
6. Develop foreign language programs in the public schools that begin with the first year of the middle or junior high and continue through high school in at least one of the commonly taught languages.

7. Support foreign language teacher efforts to develop curricula that will result in measurable skills and knowledge of the culture and international relations of the countries whose languages are taught.
8. Support instruction at the high school level in such important languages as Chinese, Japanese, and Russian.
9. Support efforts to introduce elementary school children to foreign languages and cultures through carefully designed FLES programs.

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